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“*SUPERCILIA JUNCTA.*”

Mr. G. P. Krapp in a recent number of *MOD. LANG. NOTES* (vol. xix, p. 235) has a note on the lines :

“And, save hir browes joyneden y-fere,
Ther nas no lak, in ought I can espyen,”

in Chaucer's description of Criseyde (*T. & C. Bk. v*, 813-814). He cites the sources of this detail in Dares, Benoit de Sainte-More, and Guido delle Colonne from my *Chaucer's Indebtedness to Guido delle Colonne*, p. 81, although he omits an important variant of the *Roman de Troie*, 5261,

“Mais ces sorcilles li joigneient”

I have cited elsewhere *l. c.*, p. 156. He further points out that the “*supercilia juncta*” were not noted as a defect by Dares, and that the Greek equivalent *σύνοφρυς* denoted an embellishment. But the statement “who it was—whether Isaac Porphyrogenitus, or Johannes Malalas, Manasses, or Tzetzes—first turned this grace with which Criseyde started on her career, into a defect, I am unable to say,” needs comment for more than one reason.

In Malalas the description of Briseis is found, not among the “Portraits” (ed. Bonn, 103, 11 ff.) as in Dares but in the account of the capture of Legopolis by Achilles, and here (101, 17, cf. *ἐκλογή ιστοριῶν* in Cramer, *Anecdota*, II, p. 203, 8) *σύνοφρυς* no more denotes a defect than it does in the description of Philoctetes (104, 3), Priam (105, 8) and Ulysses (Is. Porph. in *Polemonis Declamationes*, ed. Hinck, 81, 18). The work of Isaac, which is based upon that of Malalas (cf. Noack, *Philol. Suppl.*, vi, p. 409; Fürst, *Philol.* LX, p. 240) omits this episode (Cf. 60, 2; 69, 6 ff.). The episode, but not the description of Briseis is found in Johannes Antiochensis (ed. Heinrich, 7, 5: cf. Fürst, *Philol.* LX, p. 254, n. 53; LXI, p. 595) and in Cedrenus (ed. Bonn, 221, 22; 222, 6). Her name is not even mentioned by Manasses, according to whom the cause of Achilles's wrath was the unjust condemnation of Palamedes (ed. Bonn, 1277-1283; cf. Fürst, *Philol.* LX, p. 337). Finally Tzetzes (c. 1150) who is indebted to Malalas for details in his description of Briseis (*Antehomerica*, 355 ff.; cf.

Fürst, *l. c.*, p. 343) qualifies this facial characteristic as a defect with the same emphasis as the contemporary French writer;

“*φαιδρὸν μειδιῶσα, σύνοφρυς δ' εἶδετο ἔμπης.*”

But this similarity of opinion in Tzetzes and Benoit is not due to the indebtedness of one to the other, or of both to a common source, but to a common standard of beauty, according to which they interpreted the statement they found in their several authorities, whose ultimate source was the Greek Dictys. That joined eyebrows were considered a mark of beauty by both the Greeks and Romans—as it has always been so considered by the Oriental peoples—has been fully set forth by Fürst (*Philol.* LXI, pp. 385-388). He, however, does not fail to note the exceptional unfavorable opinion of this feature, given by writers on physiognomy. A study of the influence of physiological treatises on popular conceptions of beauty has still to be written, but a specific instance of the physiognomists' conception that this facial characteristic was the mark of a gloomy and soured person (Fürst, *l. c.*, p. 387) is to be found in the cited verse of Tzetzes, where *σύνοφρυς* denotes a moral as well as a physical characteristic.

The same unfavorable moral characterization is found in Mediæval Occidental versions of a treatise on physiognomy (cf. e. g. R. Steele, *Lydgate's and Burgh's Secrees of Old Philisoffres*, 2612 ff.; *Three Prose Versions of the Secreta Secretorum*, pp. 115, 230, 233; *Hist. litt.*, XXI, 216, 224) outside of the fact that it was considered a great physical defect. Slightly marked eyebrows was one of the attributes of the ideal feminine beauty of French poets from the twelfth to the fourteenth century (Cf. *Oeuvres de Eustache Deschamps*, vol. XI, ed. G. Raynaud, pp. 272-273; *Gui de Bourgogne*, ed. Guessard et Michelant, p. 54), and nowhere is this characteristic more emphasized than in Chaucer's description in the *Miller's Tale* of the carpenter's wife,

“Ful smale y-pulled were hir browes two.”

(*C. T. B.* 59; cf. *Rom. of the Rose*, 529).

Assuredly in this respect Alison is the antithesis of Criseyde.

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